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Testimony in Support of House Bill 5190

AN ACT CONCERNING TESTING FOR HUMAN IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS

By Linda Estabrook, Executive Director

Hartford Gay and Lesbian Health Collective

March 9, 2022

To the distinguished members of the Public Health Committee:

I respectfully submit the following testimony in support of H.B. 5190, *An Act Concerning Testing for Human Immunodeficiency Virus*. As Executive Director of the Hartford Gay and Lesbian Health Collective, I have experienced first hand the opportunity HIV testing can bring to individuals.

The Hartford Gay and Lesbian Health Collective was one of the first two sites in Connecticut to offer HIV testing in 1986. Our agency is a provider of HIV testing and prevention services, and also services for people living with HIV/AIDS.

I believe the proposed bill is important because it will create a wider reach of HIV testing, along with a wider exposure for medical professionals and their patients, about HIV risk and transmission. This wider reach and exposure will also help to decrease the stigma that still surrounds HIV.

We continue to diagnose individuals with HIV with clinical presentations of/or close to AIDS. If HIV diagnosis was caught earlier, these individuals would not be in such precarious, potentially life-threatening conditions.

Passing this legislation will make Connecticut a leading example to the rest of the country as efforts are underway to get to zero new infections and zero deaths by 2030. I know that HIV service providers in the state stand ready to support medical providers and their patients throughout CT.

Thank you so much for bringing this issue in your committee. I strongly support H.B. 5190 and I urge you to vote favorably for this important bill. Routine HIV testing is an important tool that can help end this epidemic.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Estabrook, Executive Director

Hartford Gay and Lesbian Health Collective

March 9, 2022, H.B. 5190